

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment to the claims was given in a telephone interview with Attorney Thomas Hoover on 23 September 2011.

The application has been amended as follows:

In the specification:

Replace page 2, lines 2-3 with the following:

The present application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/360,709, filed July 26, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. 6,610,071.

In the claims:

In claim 2, line 2: after "and second", insert --suture--;

In claim 3, line 2: after "is green and", delete --another--;

In claim 3, line 2: after "is green and", insert --the second--;

In claim 5, lines 3-4: after "three connected needles", delete --the connected needles--;

In claim 5, line 6: before "a second suture strand", delete --,--;

In claim 5, line 6: after "a second suture strand", insert --,--;

In claim 5, line 8: after "the second suture strand", delete --,--;

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In claim 5, line 8: after “the second suture strand”, insert --;-- and a new paragraph;

In claim 5, line 10: after "attached to a", insert --first--;

In claim 5, line 11: before “attached to”, delete –needled--;

In claim 5, line 11: before “attached to”, insert –needle--;

In claim 5, line 11: after “attached to”, insert –a second--;

In claim 5, line 17: after "be distinguished with", delete --the--;

In claim 5, line 17: after "be distinguished with", insert --a--;

Cancel claim 8;

In claim 10, line 1: after “The”, delete –suture device of claim 5 wherein the prosthetic heart valve further comprises a cuff through which suture strands are threaded.--;

In claim 10, line 1: after “The”, insert –method of claim 1 further comprising threading the suture strands through a cuff of the prosthetic device.--;

In claim 11, line1: after “The”, delete –suture device of claim 5 wherein the prosthetic heart valve comprises an annular cuff, the suture strands extending around a central valve.--;

In claim 11, line 1: after “The”, insert –method of claim 10 wherein the threading step comprises inserting the suture strands through an annular cuff, the suture strands extending around a central valve.--;

In claim 14, line 2: before “aortic valve.”, delete –prosthetic heart valve comprises an--;

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In claim 14, line 2: before "aortic valve.", insert –suture device is configured for suturing a prosthetic--;

In claim 17, line 6: after "to the second", delete –need be--;

In claim 17, line 6: after "to the second", insert –needle--;

In claim 20, lines 1-3: after "The method of claim 1", delete –further comprising using a suture system having at least three needles--;

In claim 20, line 3: before "attached by suture strands", insert --wherein the needles of the suture system are--;

In claim 21, line 3: after "inserting a first suture", insert –strand--;

In claim 21, line 7: after "being attached to", delete –a--;

In claim 21, line 7: after "being attached to", insert –the first--;

In claim 21, line 8: after "suture strand,", delete –the second needle being inserted--.

Allowance

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The prior art of record fails to disclose or render obvious the combination of features as claimed. In particular, the prior art of record fails to disclose a plurality of needles attached in a chain via suture strands in which some of the needles in the chain are attached to two separate suture strands in which each suture strand that is attached to a single needle can be identified via a visual indicator.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Lindsey Bachman whose telephone number is 271-272-6208. The examiner can normally be reached Monday through Thursday from 7:30am to 4:00pm and alternating Fridays.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, please contact the examiner's supervisor, Gary Jackson, at 571-272-4697. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

If there are any inquiries that are not being addressed by first contacting the Examiner or the Supervisor, you may send an email inquiry to TC3700_Workgroup_D_Inquiries@uspto.gov.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/L. B./

Examiner, Art Unit 3734

/Gary Jackson/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3734

September 26, 2011